

3/29/11

Dear Senator Harp,

My name is Thomas Meyer and I am a sophomore in the Ellis Clark Regional Agriscience and Technology Program in Woodbury, CT. I live in Southbury, CT. and I attend this agriscience regional school choice program because, agriculture is my passion. After I finish with my formal education I plan to continue with the agricultural field by starting my own dairy farm with a small cow-calf production style beef herd. Everything that I do at the school makes me that much more capable of fulfilling this dream. So far through this school I have competed in two state competitions one for farm business management and one for meats judging. I have competed at regional's for farm business management at the Big E and traveled to Indianapolis, Indiana to compete again in farm business management at the national level where we as a team faced one team from every state in the country. Along with the two competitions or career development events (CDE) that I have just named there are twenty six other CDE's that are designed to help enhance the students' knowledge that will prepare them for their future careers in agriculture. As if taking a plane (my first plain ride) to Indianapolis wasn't fun enough, me and about forty of my student colleagues took a bus to Canada and spent three nights and for days there the purpose being to go to the royal winter fair and observe the worlds top of the line dairy cows. On the way back home we were privileged with the opportunity to visit three dairy farms housing multiple hundreds or thousands of head of cattle. Each one possessed a different method of production- a rotary milker, a robot milker, and an ordinary tie stall pipeline operation. However my involvement has not been restricted to trips; I have also helped out at the plant sale and pet adoption, served as a tour guide at the elementary open house, attended a junior leadership conference workshop, adult education classes where we bring in professionals in different fields of agricultural activities and educate interested adults on these skills. My personal favorite though is taking care of the animals and assisting in the deliveries of the babies- calves, piglets, and kids (baby goats).

As a requirement of the school we must have a S.A.E.- supervised agricultural experience- or in simple terms a job. This requirement is designed to help us expand our hands on experience outside of the classroom and to practice what we learn in the class room and learn more about it. I currently work at Hannan's dairy farm where I operate the feed cart, feed the calves and bed the barn, as well as any other jobs that are required of me.

My attendance at nonnewaug high school brings me closer and closer to my dream of operating a dairy farm. We would very much appreciate a raise in our budget to allow for more students to get the chance for this absolutely amazing education experience that I am blessed to be a part of. The increased budget will also allow for more opportunities throughout my high school years. I am writing this letter to encourage you to **please urge the Appropriations Committee to pledge 9 million dollars of the school choice funding increases proposed in the Governor's budget to the state's 19 regional (vo-ag) agriscience programs.**

Our agriscience programs have been drastically underfunded for over 20 years as compared to the magnet schools, charter schools, vocational technical schools and the other school choice funding programs. (Please see attached flyer with details)

This will allow hundreds of more students like me to enroll in these successful programs so they will have the same positive experience I am having now.

Thank you for your time and attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,
Thomas J. Meyer